A Dead Son  
*II Kings 4:8-37*

PERCUSSIONIST

SINGER

STORYTELLER

WOMAN

HUSBAND

ELISHA   
GEHAZI

SON

(Props include one stool and a staff. STORYTELLER is free to roam the stage, but he or she should move to highlight the action on stage. Open on WOMAN center stage near stool, ELISHA with staff and hand on shoulder of GEHAZI stage left. HUSBAND and SON are offstage or facing upstage stage right.)

STORYTELLER

A dead son. II Kings 4: 8-37.

(as ELISHA and GEHAZI cross downstage)

And it fell on a day, that Elisha passed to Shunem, where was a great woman. (WOMAN bows to ELISHA.)

and she constrained him to eat bread.

(ELISHA and GEHAZI enter WOMAN’s house, ELISHA sits

on stool. WOMAN kneels and serves bread.)

And so it was, that as oft as he passed by, he turned in thither to eat bread.

(HUSBAND enters; WOMAN stands; ELISHA and GEHAZI exit.)

And she said unto her husband.

WOMAN

Behold now, I perceive that this is an holy man of God, which passeth by us continually.  Let us make a little chamber, I pray thee, on the wall; and let us set for him there a bed, and a table, and a stool, and a candlestick: and it shall be, when he cometh to us, that he shall turn in thither

(While WOMAN speaks, HUSBAND broods; HUSBAND raises hand to strike

WOMAN; STORYTELLER interposes as MUSIC ceases; HUSBAND calms; WOMAN continues; HUSBAND gestures assent, exits to tableau with stool; MUSIC resumes; WOMAN exits to tableau; ELISHA and GEHAZI enter chamber, ELISHA reclines, and GEHAZI kneels by door.)

STORYTELLER

And it fell on a day, that he came thither, and he turned into the chamber, and lay there.  
And he said to Gehazi his servant.

ELISHA

Call this Shunammite.

(WOMAN approaches door. GEHAZI moves to other side of ELISHA.)

STORYTELLER

And when he had called her, she stood before him. And he said unto him.

ELISHA

Say now unto her.

(GEHAZI crosses and kneels before the WOMAN, who may also kneel.)

GEHAZI

Behold, thou hast been careful for us with all this care; what is to be done for thee?  Wouldest thou be spoken for to the king, or to the captain of the host?

STORYTELLER

And she answered.

WOMAN

I dwell among mine own people.

(WOMAN returns to tableau elsewhere in her house; GEHAZI moves to other

side of ELISHA.)

STORYTELLER

And he said.

ELISHA

What then is to be done for her?

STORYTELLER

And Gehazi answered.

GEHAZI

Verily she hath no child, and her husband is old.

STORYTELLER

And he said.

ELISHA

Call her.

(WOMAN stands in door. ELISHA moves to her, and she kneels.)

STORYTELLER

And when he had called her, she stood in the door. And he said.

ELISHA

About this season, according to the time of life, thou shalt embrace a son.

STORYTELLER  
And she said.

WOMAN  
Nay, my lord, thou man of God, do not lie unto thine handmaid.

(ELISHA kisses her on her head. ELISHA and GEHAZI exit stage left; WOMAN approaches HUSBAND, touches his shoulder and he turns away slightly; WOMAN crosses to face HUSBAND, kneels, leans in to kiss, freezing just before kiss.)

STORYTELLER  
And the woman conceived, and bare a son at that season that ELISHA had said unto her, according to the time of life.

(Break tableau; WOMAN exits to different tableau, HUSBAND and SON reap center stage.)

And when the child was grown, it fell on a day, that he went out to his father to the reapers.

  (SON collapses.)

And he said unto his father.

SON

My head, my head.

(HUSBAND hurries to SON, motioning to STORYTELLER as servant.)

STORYTELLER  
And he said to a lad.

(STORYTELLER as servant hurries to SON.)

HUSBAND

Carry him to his mother.

(WOMAN sits on porch, and servant/STORYTELLER carries child to mother.)

STORYTELLER  
And when he had taken him, and brought him to his mother, he sat on her knees till noon,

(The SON has died.)

STORYTELLER (continued)

and then died.

(WOMAN grieves audibly, and then places SON in ELISHA’S room by simply laying him out on the floor and exiting through the door.)

STORYTELLER (continued)

And she went up, and laid him on the bed of the man of God,

(WOMAN exits Chamber; HUSBAND enters to prayer downstage)

STORYTELLER (continued)

and shut the door upon him, and went out.

(WOMAN approaches HUSBAND, who rises.)

STORYTELLER (continued)

And she called unto her husband, and said

WOMAN

Send me, I pray thee, one of the young men, and one of the donkeys, that I may run to the man of God, and come again.

STORYTELLER

And he said.

HUSBAND

Wherefore wilt thou go to him to day?  It is neither new moon, nor sabbath.

(HUSBAND crosses downstage of WOMAN, WOMAN grabs HUSBAND’s arm, HUSBAND faces WOMAN.)

STORYTELLER  
And she said.

WOMAN

It shall be well.

(HUSBAND exits upstage to mourning tableau; STORYTELLER places stool before WOMAN, stands slightly stage left of WOMAN; WOMAN saddles stool-donkey, then sits.)

STORYTELLER  
Then she saddled a donkey, and said to her servant.

WOMAN  
Drive, and go forward; slack not thy riding for me, except I bid thee.

STORYTELLER  
So she went and came unto the man of God to Mount Carmel. And it came to pass, when the man of God saw her afar off, that he said to Gehazi his servant.

ELISHA

Behold, yonder is that Shunammite. Run now, I pray thee, to meet her, and say unto her. Is it well with thee?

(GEHAZI approaches WOMAN center stage, kneeling.)

GEHAZI

Is it well with thy husband? Is it well with the child?

STORYTELLER  
And she answered.

WOMAN  
It is well.

(GEHAZI and WOMAN approach ELISHA; WOMAN falls at ELISHA’S feet)

STORYTELLER

And when she came to the man of God to the hill, she caught him by the feet: (GEHAZI moves to pick WOMAN up; ELISHA intervenes.)

but Gehazi came near to thrust her away. And the man of God said.

ELISHA

Let her alone; for her soul is vexed within her: and the LORD hath hid it from me, and hath not told me.

STORYTELLER

Then she said.

WOMAN  
Did I desire a son of my lord?  Did I not say, do not deceive me?

STORYTELLER

Then he said to Gehzi.

ELISHA

Gird up thy loins, and take my staff in thine hand, and go thy way: if thou meet any man, salute him not; and if any salute thee, answer him not again: and lay my staff upon the face of the child.

(GEHAZI takes staff.)

STORYTELLER  
And the mother of the child said.

WOMAN  
As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee.

(ELISHA and WOMAN tableau.)

STORYTELLER  
And he arose, and followed her.

(GEHAZI crosses to chamber door.)

And Gehazi passed on before them.

(Gehazi enters, disgusted at the odor, staying by door and stretching with staff.)

and laid the staff upon the face of the child; but there was neither voice, nor hearing. (GEHAZI exits hurriedly and returns to ELISHA who crosses in with WOMAN.) Wherefore he went again to meet him, and told him, saying.

GEHAZI

The child is not awaked.

(GEHAZI, ELISHA, and WOMAN enter house; ELISHA enters chamber; music stops. GEHAZI kneels outside door; HUSBAND crosses downstage, and HUSBAND and WOMAN kneel in prayer, waiting.)

STORYTELLER

And when Elisha was come into the house, behold, the child was dead, and laid upon his bed.  He went in therefore, and shut the door upon them twain, and prayed unto the LORD.  
 (As ELISHA moves to lie on SON, STORYTELLER picks up SON from behind,

standing him up, while ELISHA stands in front of him, hands to hands; STORYTELLER lays SON back down.)  
And he went up, and lay upon the child, and put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands: and stretched himself upon the child; and the flesh of the child waxed warm.

(ELISHA exits chamber, as if to leave; HUSBAND and WOMAN notice, return to prayer. ELISHA sees them and determines to try again.)

Then he returned, and walked in the house to and fro;

(A strong percussive sound follows ELISHA into the chamber. STORYTELLER

picks SON up as before.)

and went up, and stretched himself upon him:

(While standing, SON sneezes, ELISHA recoils; STORYTELLER lays sneezing

SON down, ELISHA bending over SON.)

and the child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes. And he called GEHAZI, and said.

ELISHA

(shouting)

Call this Shunammite.

(WOMAN rises and rushes to the chamber.)

STORYTELLER  
So he called her. And when she was come in unto him, he said.

ELISHA

Take up thy son.

(WOMAN faints, GEHAZI catches her; HUSBAND rises.)

STORYTELLER  
Then she went in, and fell at his feet,

(WOMAN stretches her hands in a gesture of worship.)

and bowed herself to the ground,

(WOMAN and SON embrace; HUSBAND stands in door.)

and took up her son,

(WOMAN and SON embrace HUSBAND and freeze; GEHAZI cares for weary ELISHA)

and went out.

(STORYTELLER touches embracing family, then holds arm out to ELISHA and GEHAZI; final tableau until music ends.)